

Appl. No.: 10/042,754
Office Action dated October 6, 2005
Amendment Dated: December 5, 2005

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims:

1-82 (Canceled)

83. (Currently Amended) A method of mixing a food product with another food product, the method comprising:

rotating the product and the another food product in a tumble drum; and

reciprocating the tumble drum linearly in a ~~slow~~ forward/backward manner to slide product along the tumble drum and thereby discharge the product from the tumble drum, the forward movement speed being less than the backward movement speed.

84. (Currently Amended) The method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:

driving a product tray to move the product longitudinally along the product tray; and

fixing the tumble drum to the product tray such that both the tumble drum and the product tray move in a ~~slow~~ forward/backward manner to move product along both the product tray and the tumble drum, the forward movement speed being less than the backward movement speed.

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85. **(Currently Amended)** The method as defined in Claim 84, further comprising:

sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray without contacting the product and producing a product feed signal functionally related to the volume of product being conveyed along the product tray; and

driving the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

86. **(Currently Amended)** The method as defined in Claim 8483, further comprising:

spraying the product with a liquid before the product enters the drum.

87-97 **(Canceled)**

98. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 8483, further comprising:

lining the tumble drum with a plastic material liner; and

engaging the product tray and the liner to move the drum in the forward/backward manner.

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99. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 98, further comprising:

providing a plurality of inwardly projecting ribs each having first and second flight surfaces on the plastic material liner, such that the rotating product is tumbled as a function of the rotational direction of the tumble drum.

100. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:

the tumbler drum comprises a generally sleeve-shaped body; and

providing a plurality of circumferentially spaced ribs each fixed to the sleeve-shaped body, each rib having first and second flight surfaces for tumbling the rotating product as a function of the rotational direction of the tumble drum.

101. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 84, further comprising:
powering the product tray to move the food product longitudinally along the product tray in a ~~slow forward/fast-backward~~ manner, the forward movement speed being less than the backward movement speed.

102. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 84, further comprising:
sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray without contacting

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the product and producing product feed rate signal functionally related to the volume of product conveyed along the product tray.

103. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 102, further comprising:

supplying seasoning to the product moved by the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

104. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:
uniformly distributing a curtain of seasoning on the product upstream of the drum.

105. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 102, further comprising:

controlling a seasoning auger driven by an auger motor in response to the product feed rate signal.

106. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 102, further comprising:

adjusting the feed rate of product to the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

107. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:
inputting operator selected parameters to a computer; and
automatically controlling movement of a the product tray and thus the quantity of
product moving along the product tray and into the drum in response to the operator input
signals.

108. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:
tumbling the product and seasoning.

109. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 83, further comprising:
driving a product tray to move the product longitudinally along the product tray; and
sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray without contacting
the product and producing product feed rate signal functionally related to the volume of
product conveyed along the product tray.

110. **(Canceled)**

111. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 109, further comprising:

driving the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

112. **(Currently Amended)** A method as defined in Claim 109, further comprising:
spraying the product with a liquid before the product enters the drum.

113. **(Previously Presented)** A method as defined in Claim 109, further comprising:

supplying seasoning to the product moved by the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

114. **(New)** A method of mixing a food product with another food product, the method comprising:

rotating the product and the another food product in a tumble drum; and

reciprocating the tumble drum linearly in a forward/backward manner to slide product along the tumble drum and thereby discharge the product from the tumble drum, the forward movement being less than the backward movement;

driving a product tray to move the product longitudinally along the product tray;

sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray and producing

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product feed rate signal functionally related to the volume of product conveyed along the product tray; and

fixing the tumble drum to the product tray such that both the tumble drum and the product tray move in a slow forward/backward manner to move product along both the product tray and the tumble drum.